

Our prayers are with all those in the path of Hurricane Dorian.



President Walton's September 2019 Message

Passing Along the Faith to Future Generations



A good friend of mine recently shared the joyful news of the birth of his new granddaughter. This isn't his first grandchild. In fact, it is the seventh grandchild. What makes this one so special is that the other six grandchildren are all boys! That little girl will have some protection as she grows! And grandpa is looking forward to participating in her baptism soon! This has nothing to do about any ritual, but everything to do with passing on the faith. What a great privilege God has given each of us to teach others about Jesus. The best way we often do this teaching is through our lives as we let Jesus be seen in how we live.

I once heard someone say that our lives should be lived through the past but for the future. We can't change what once was, but we can influence what will be. God's Word is very instructive, pointing us forward as witnesses. Jesus

said, in Acts 1, ***“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*** Jesus was pointing His disciples to their future work of ministry. Having learned from the past, they were now called on to pass along the faith. The same is true for each of us.

The Psalmist wrote about this very thing in Psalm 102:14. ***“Let this [God's Word] be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the LORD...”*** I find such joy in watching my own grandchildren sing songs about Jesus. It causes me to remember when my adult children were little, and we taught them. In fact, my oldest son misinterpreted one song which became a favorite for Edith and me. The actual words were “be thankful” but in his two-year-old mind the words were “eat my thumb.” It still brings a huge smile to my face when I remember his little voice singing it!

As far back as Deuteronomy 6 the concern for passing along the faith from generation to generation is clearly stated. We read, “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” God knows that the lessons taught in our homes are the lessons that stick, which I'm reminded of when my wife tells me that I'm becoming like my father... Peter emphasized the importance of teaching our children on the day of Pentecost saying to the crowd, ***“Repent and be baptized every one of you in***

the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” The goal is always to pass along the faith.



Throughout history the concern to promulgate the faith has been a part of the church. Luther’s goal in writing the Small Catechism was to provide a format to pass along the faith. He wrote, *“In plain form in which the head of the family shall teach them to his household.”* This is why confirmation ministry is so critical to assisting our young people in strengthening the faith through catechetical instruction, building on the faith passed down from their family, or in some cases, maybe even absent from their family. A strong focus on God’s Word is so important, but it’s seen and reinforced by how we live it out!

We are living in a day when churches are facing challenges of all kinds. We often hear reports of young people abandoning regular weekly worship, having little confidence in the “institutional” church. How refreshing it was to see some 20,000 exuberant youth gathered in Minneapolis for the National Youth Gathering, not only speaking and singing their faith, but living it out all across that city. Some youth who have stopped worshipping regularly said the reason they stopped coming was because they no longer felt welcomed. It wasn’t so much what was said, but the way they felt treated. How we live out our faith in Jesus matters. You never know who is watching or being impacted by how you live.

Maybe you’ve heard the expression, “actions speak louder than words.” It seems to hold true in many instances. Parents quickly learn if their actions don’t match their words, kids will adopt the actions quicker than the words. Likewise, we want to impact people for Jesus. However, if our good words about Jesus don’t match the how we live, I can almost guarantee you which will have the greater influence. Even God took action, allowing His Son, Jesus, to be crucified for our sins and the sins of the whole world! God didn’t just speak it, but rather showed the length He was willing to go to extend His grace and love to sinful humanity.

Now that call falls to each of us. It isn’t just about passing along the faith to our children, but to all who don’t yet know Jesus. Our call is to share the hope that has transformed us. Our privilege is to bind up the broken hearted, to care for the lonely and despairing. Sometimes something as tiny as a hug speaks volumes more than any Bible passage we might share. It’s not that the Word of God is not powerful, but how we make use of that Word is equally as powerful, and in some cases, even more powerful to those who don’t yet know Jesus.

I’ve had the great privilege of baptizing my two children and my three grandchildren. There is an exhilarating joy in knowing that they are marked by Jesus and nothing in this world can separate them from His promises because He has claimed them as His own. They are far from perfect although I like to think my grandchildren are pretty darn close, but when they are not I hope they will always know where to find forgiveness. They have learned the beautiful song, *“Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so; Little ones to Him belong, they are weak but He is strong.”* Yes, Jesus loves you, and He’s likely shown you that in a million ways—some you recognize, and probably many you do not. As those who have been redeemed, we now have the privilege of passing along the faith for future generations, so they also can experience the love and grace of Jesus.

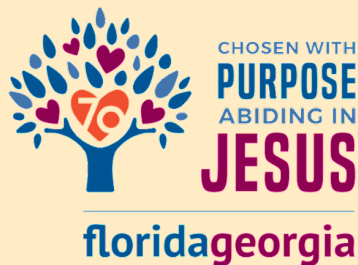


A preacher once told his congregation that we are one generation away from the

extinction of the church. He said all it would take is one generation to stop believing to destroy God's Church on earth. While I pray it is never so, here is what I do know. We have everything we need for success. We have the power of God's Spirit, and His holy and mighty Word of truth. If you and I live out our faith in Jesus and actively seek to pass our faith on; if our children and grandchildren see Jesus in us and through us; the next generation, with such a faith cultivated in them, will do the same for their children and grandchildren! So let me end with this question: Who could you pass the faith on to in the next 30 days? I'll bet there are eager people who God is making ready to listen!

In His peace,

Greg



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UPCOMING EVENTS:

- [70th Anniversary Challenge](#)
- [Pastors Conference - Sept. 23-25](#)
- Educators Conference - Sept 25 - 27